

Message on the Observance of Saint Patrick's Day, 1998 *March 12, 1998*

Warmest greetings to everyone celebrating Saint Patrick's Day. On this day dedicated to Ireland's great patron saint, I join millions of other Americans across our country in remembering with pride the roots of our Irish heritage.

As it has been for so many immigrants, America has always been a beacon of hope for the Irish people. And the Irish people have always been a source of light and energy to keep that beacon shining brightly. They arrived with little. But the Irish did not come to America empty-handed. They brought with them strong arms and an even stronger spirit that would help to build our nation's great canals, bridges, and railroads; that would wrest coal from Pennsylvania's mines and raise the skyscrapers of New York City. They brought with them a love of words that enriched American journalism and literature. They brought a great reverence for education and built schools across the country renowned for their scholarship and social conscience.

Perhaps their greatest gifts to America have been an abiding love of liberty and a patriotic spirit. Irish Americans have served with distinction in every American conflict, from the Revolutionary War to the Persian Gulf, and their keen sense of social justice made them among the first and most effective voices for labor reform. Generations of Irish Americans entered public service to reach out to those in need—to feed the poor, find jobs for the unemployed, fight for racial equality, and champion social reform.

The United States continues to draw strength and vision from our multicultural, multiracial society. As we celebrate Saint Patrick's Day once again, we remember with special pride the gifts of Irish Americans: faith in God, hilt and laughter, love of family and community, and an unswerving commitment to freedom and justice that continues to enrich our nation.

Best wishes to all for a wonderful celebration.

BILL CLINTON

Remarks at a Dinner Honoring Senator Ernest F. Hollings *March 12, 1998*

Thank you very much. First of all, on behalf of Senator and Mrs. Hollings, myself, and all the southerners present at this dinner—[*laughter*—I want to thank Esther Coopersmith for serving okra and cornbread. I don't know what the rest of you thought about it, but I felt good about it. [*Laughter*]

Esther, I thank you for your friendship to me and to Fritz and Peatsy, and for opening your home and bringing your whole family together; especially thank you for Connie, who's done such wonderful work for me.

Don't you love to hear Fritz Hollings talk? You know, one night back in 1985—this is a true story—I was a lowly Governor—[*laughter*—or as my predecessor said, a Governor of a small Southern State. And I was sitting at home one night, and I decided I would do something responsible, so I flipped on the television, and instead of turning to HBO, I turned

to C-SPAN. And it was more entertaining than HBO because it was a roast of Senator Hollings.

One of the speakers was Senator Kennedy, who commented on Senator Hollings' campaign in 1984, and said that he was the first non-English-speaking person ever to serve in the Senate and a great inspiration to non-English-speaking Americans everywhere. [*Laughter*] And every time some of my friends get all upset about these English-only referendums, I thought to myself, you know, if Fritz didn't have to run for reelection, they could send him to California; he could beat it all by himself. [*Laughter*]

Anyway, I'm glad to be here speaking for a man who Strom Thurmond believes is too young to serve the people of South Carolina. [*Laughter*] But I think he's about to get the hang of it.

I also want to say that one of the things—this is serious now—there are several things I

like about Senator Hollings. Number one, he's smart. Number two, he works hard, and he's not—he is just as dogged today as he was the first day he showed up here, the first time he took the oath of office, which I think is important. Number three, he believes that when people elect or reelect him, they have given him, for a while, their power to do something with.

You heard him say that. You know, sometimes I feel like a person that's really out of his time here. I keep telling people to think about the future, but sometimes I feel like an artifact of the past. When I come to Washington and I read and hear what people say about politics, it looks to me like people are in love with power and positioning for it. I thought the whole purpose of democracy was to give people power in a limited fashion for a limited time so they could do something with it for the benefit of the public at large. That is the way Fritz Hollings has lived his entire public life and another reason he should be elected in this election year. And I really appreciate it.

Let me just say one other thing about the past. He's already talked about the vote to reduce the deficit in 1993. It was a very hard vote. It was an agonizing vote for a southern Democrat. It's one of the reason that we lost the Congress in '94, because people had not yet felt the benefits of it.

But we had to do something. The deficit was \$290 billion; it was projected to be \$370 billion this year. It's now projected to be \$10 billion this year. And if the Asian financial difficulties don't hurt us too much, we will, in fact, balance the budget this year, may even have a small surplus—if not this year, certainly next year. None of that would have happened if, in my opinion, if he hadn't been willing to stand up and take a strong position, because everybody knew that there was not another Member of Congress that had as much at risk as he did. And he did it anyway because it was the right thing to do.

And 15 million jobs later, we have the lowest unemployment rate in 24 years, the lowest inflation rate in 30 years, the highest homeownership in history. I don't think it would have happened if we hadn't brought the deficit down beginning in 1992.

Now, let me make one last point about Senator Hollings. It's true that I was 2 years old when he first got elected. *[Laughter]* But I was having to pay the adult ticket price at the movies

when he got elected Governor in 1958, because I was 12. *[Laughter]* But he is a very young person. Peatsy is a very young person. They make you happy to be around them because they're always full of life and always thinking about tomorrow.

What really—sometimes younger people in our business are at a disadvantage because sometimes they're thinking a little bit too much about today and a little bit too little about tomorrow. And I think all of us would admit that as we've grown older in life, as long as we have our health and our mind is working well and we are engaged, the older we get, as long we're functioning properly, the more likely we are to be thinking further into the future, the more likely we are to be concerned about grandchildren as well as our children.

And if you think about the time in which we live and the speed with which things are changing—not least in the telecommunications business, which, has a lot of representatives here, and I thank them all for being here—this is a time when we need someone who is not only smart and active but someone who is literally capable of thinking about the long-run interests of the country. Fritz Hollings wanted to save Social Security when most people didn't know it was in danger. Now it's become part of the mantra of official Washington. I'd like to say I thought of it first, but I didn't. He was preaching to me about it for 3 years before I ever made the first speech about it.

And I think that this is a time when—if you think about the kinds of questions we have to face here, the speed with which things are changing, the complexity of the problem, and the way we are likely to totally reshape the way we work and live and relate to each other and the rest of the world in the next decade, it is probably more important that he be elected this time than in any of the previous elections in which he has run.

I hope the people of South Carolina, like people of my native State and the whole South who have been leaving the Democrats in droves, will see a better economy, a lower crime rate, the lowest welfare rolls in 27 years, the lowest crime rate in 24 years, a people coming together instead of being driven apart, and think, you know, maybe old Fritz was right all along.

He was, and he's right for the future, too. And I thank you for being here for him.

God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:05 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to Rita L. (Peatsy) Hollings, wife of Senator Hollings; and

Esther Coopersmith, dinner host, and her daughter, Connie.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Dinner

March 12, 1998

Thank you very much. Thank you, Steve, and thank you all for being here. I would just like to briefly make a few points. I've seen almost everybody around this table in the last few weeks, and I wouldn't think of putting you through another speech. *[Laughter]* But I would like to say a couple of things.

First of all, I want to thank you for your extraordinary labors on behalf of our party. Second, I want to say that I believe the upcoming 150th anniversary of our party is a great opportunity for us to send a signal to America that we expect to be around for another 150 years by continuing to press our country forward into the future together.

I spent a lot of time in the last few weeks reading about the beginning of the Democratic Party and Andrew Jackson's Presidency and all the things he did right—and one or two things he probably did wrong in the light of history. *[Laughter]* But I have very strong convictions now, that are stronger than they were when I came here even, that our party has shed a lot of the baggage that was holding us back in public perception. We have proved that together we can take the country into the future with a strong economy, a declining crime rate, a mending social fabric, a strong position in the world, and that we have a great obligation at this good time for our country to bear down and press forward. And I hope we can all do that around the 150th celebration.

Steve mentioned the victory of Lois Capps in California in the remarkable special election for Congress. Let me say it was a truly remarkable victory because I think that that seat, which was previously occupied by her husband, was one of only three Democratic seats in the country where Al Gore and I did not win in '96. I think we lost by a point because of the Ralph Nader vote, but nonetheless, we didn't quite win it.

The overwhelming lion's share of credit goes to Lois Capps, who is a remarkable person. Many of you know that her daughter, Laura, works for me and has for some time. A lot of the credit goes to the feelings that the voters in that district have about her late husband, Walter, who was also an astonishing human being. But I think that she ran the race in the way that I think that the Democrats ought to run their races. She ran a grassroots campaign, a local campaign. She did not ask for it, nor seek any outside politician to come in and tell the people of her district how to vote.

In so doing, she did exactly what I did when I was Governor of my State. For nearly 12 years, I felt the same way. But she embraced the issues that were reflected in my State of the Union Address and that our party is advancing this year. And she was able to do it because that's what she heard people talking to her about. In political terms in the way people write about these races up here, perhaps one of the most significant things is that she was able to win with a torrent of so-called independent third party expenditures against her on any number of issues. But she did it with old-fashioned grassroots campaigning, common sense, a great heart, and a real fidelity to the kinds of issues that I think we have to continue to press, including the Patients' Bill of Rights, the whole range of educational issues, and the resolution of the tobacco litigation in a way that helps to protect our children from the dangers of tobacco.

It was a very impressive campaign. It is a mark, if you will, of the future of what we could do all over the country this year. But if we want to do it, we have to do what she did. We have to have good candidates. They have to be closely tied to the people. They have to be interested in grassroots work and not ashamed to get out there and really hustle and listen to people and work with them. They don't have to have more money than their opponents,